

Medicine in the Public Press

With this number of the Journal is introduced a column of comment on medicine in the public press. The editor invites comment on the advisability of making this column permanent and of elaborating it to include practically all of the appropriate "news."

The editor also invites every member of our association to send in all press clippings considered appropriate for discussion in this column.

Doctors Face Diploma Quiz—Under this and similar display headings the press announces that the Governor of California has instructed the Board of Medical Examiners to conduct an investigation into "Eastern diploma mills." "It has come to my attention," the Governor is quoted as saying, "that fake medical diplomas are being turned out by certain spurious medical colleges in Eastern cities, and I would suggest that your board use every precaution to prevent graduates of such colleges from practicing in this State."

Why "spurious medical colleges in Eastern cities"? There probably is no state that has as many alleged colleges purporting to prepare "doctors" as does California. Certainly there is no state that can offer less adequate laws governing the establishment and operation of "colleges" as "doctor" factories.

Again, we wonder why we are getting so excited about the hypothetical few M.D.'s who may be graduates of "spurious Eastern colleges." Why not clean the state of those hundreds and probably thousands of inadequately educated persons, many of whom are "graduates" of legally operating California "doctor" schools, and others who don't even trouble to get licenses of any sort and don't even claim to have spent the many dollars and few hours of time necessary to get a "diploma" from mushroom schools in our own state? Who are these people and where are they practicing, you ask? Walk along the prominent streets of your cities and look at the signs. Do this at night and look at the electric-lighted signs. Look in the telephone directories and at the advertising sections of the newspapers.

Then what about those that have been convicted of practicing medicine without a license and pardoned by the Governor? What about the suits that at one time were pending against some 300 of these gentry and were dismissed?

The real situation should not be limited to the sudden "probing" against the dangers from a few possible graduates of Eastern "spurious schools" while our own state is the home of far more serious conditions.

Adequate legislation to cover one phase of this problem was passed all but unanimously by the last Legislature and was vetoed by the Governor for reasons that we hope he now wishes he had never uttered.

Health Questions—The statement that a minister of a San Francisco church received and answered from 10 to 50 questions a day was considered of news value and the minister was considered the most "asked" man in the city.

If the Better Health Service conducted by the League for the Conservation of Public Health were to have its questions drop to only 10 to 50 a day, we would know that there was something wrong with the service. And our questions are all about Health. This service is growing constantly in interest and importance. That it is being more and more appreciated by the public is attested by scores of letters daily. Hundreds of correspondents endorse the method of conducting the service in the

name of an organization without the mention of the names of doctors or other medical agencies.

Rendering the Right Service in the Wrong Way—According to news items, the San Francisco public school department is entering the field of the practice of dentistry. An appropriation for funds to equip dental offices has been requested and approved. Every child, and adult for that matter, should have all the prophylactic, diagnostic and dental treatment service he needs. Particular attention should be given to children's teeth—even the temporary teeth. However, we doubt the wisdom of the schools' attempting to render this service, nor do we believe it at all necessary. If any public tax-supported bureau is to practice either medicine or dentistry, it should be the Health Board. Even this is neither necessary nor advisable until it is shown that the dental profession either cannot or will not meet the situation.

There are nearly 1000 dentists in San Francisco. Each of these already has offices, office help, equipment and other fixed expenses. They also have the necessary X-ray, laboratory, anesthesia and other contacts. In other words, they are fully prepared to practice dentistry. Why duplicate the large item of fixed charges connected with good service, which must be paid for by someone? Our casual questioning reveals the fact that there are too many dentists with so little to do that they must accept small compensation wherever offered. In addition to the hundreds of dentists' offices where overhead expense goes on even for those with little to do, there are a considerable number of clinics equipped to serve school children and others. There is now in San Francisco enough dental equipment, well arranged in offices and clinics, and enough personnel to take care of a population much greater than we now have. Why duplicate these costs and place the practice of dentistry under a bureau that cannot render the service?

"Fake" Medical Colleges—The press publishes an interview with P. T. Phillips, president, and C. B. Pinkham, secretary, of the California Board of Medical Examiners, which says: Two Los Angeles medical colleges face cancellation of charters and more than 20 practicing physicians of the State have orders to appear before the California State Medical Examiners to defend their right to practice. One of the Los Angeles institutions, the Pacific Medical College, is alleged to have sold a diploma for \$300 to one of the doctors now under arrest in St. Louis. The other institution, the American University, is charged with having offered its diplomas for an "inducement" to Italians in Venice, Italy, who desired to come to America as full-fledged American doctors. Dr. Pinkham is quoted as saying: "This 'university' is a fake, according to information we have received concerning it. Its 'campus,' as reported to us, consists of a small upstairs room in a Los Angeles suburb. This room is fitted with a dilapidated bed, an aged desk, a few broken chairs, and serves as eating, sleeping and 'working' quarters for the 'dean.'"

Assuming these statements to be true—and we have no reason to believe otherwise—what are the people of California going to do about it?

As we have repeatedly shown in articles and once in an address on the floor of the Senate in Sacramento, there is no adequate State law to control the situation. If physicians and physicians' organizations had not tried hard to remedy the situation, we could be criticized with justice. However, we have done all we could, and we will keep on trying.

What was known as the Medical College bill was prepared by and introduced into the Senate and Assembly of the Legislature in 1921 by the League for the Conservation of Public Health. It passed the Senate and died in a committee in the Assem-

bly. This bill did not raise in any way the question of secular medicine. It provided that any college or school purporting to teach the healing art should be incorporated. In order to be incorporated, it should come up to certain specified and reasonable standards, in finances, equipment, attainments of teachers, and other assets, and that it should require a certain minimum of real work in specified fundamental subjects by students who had had reasonable preparatory education.

Some such law must be placed on the statute books of the state for the protection of the good name of the state, as well as the health and even the lives of our citizens.

There are a score or more of "colleges" in California that profess to educate people to treat the sick that are no better, if indeed they are as good, as some of the "colleges" responsible for the present national scandal.

License to treat the sick in most states is based upon alleged education. The cure is to safeguard the education by making decent requirements for schools, faculties and students.

Serum Is Discovered Again—News dispatches quote a doctor A. R. Dochez of Columbia University as announcing a curative serum for scarlet fever. It may be so, but the method of announcement seems to have earmarks that make us skeptical. It is usual to see announcements of this character during the winter months when scarlet fever is prevalent, and sometimes the senegambian shows up when the "new serum" is marketed. Let us hope the report is true.

Are There Fake Doctors in State Hospitals?—Press dispatches announce that Mr. W. D. Wagner, director of the State Department of Institutions, is going to find out. He is going to conduct a "searching investigation" to find out if any of the "diploma mill" doctors have crept into his service. This is quite easy. One letter will give him the complete educational record of all of his doctors. However, it's not likely that any will be found, for the type of "doctors" who buy diplomas are not those who will be content with the "enormous" salaries that the State pays its doctors to treat its mentally sick citizens.

And They Call Them Specialists—Under this title George Ade (Cosmopolitan) treats specialists of many kinds in his usual humorous vein. We all laugh at what he says and some will see the implied moral. He refers to specialization in medicine by saying: "Doctor Gazarius says that your teeth do not look right, so he turns you over to Doctor Escatorius, in charge of the X-ray. You get the awful-looking prints of your teeth, which resemble twilight in the Sierras, and you ask Doctor Escatorius how about it, and he says that the radiograph must be submitted to Doctor Gigggleheim. After days have elapsed Doctor Gigggleheim reports that numbers 3, 18, 27 and 31 are indicated for extraction. So you tell him to go ahead and pull, but he says no, he does no extracting, but you had better go to Doctor Walzabus with your chart and let him keep on pulling until you tell him to stop.

"So you are passed along, like one of the parts of a flivver. You started out by consulting a dentist and you finish by being a dumb unit in a great system."

Discoveries Announced Too Quick—Many American doctors and scientific men are too quick in their announcements of discoveries, Doctor Arthur Biedl, professor of medicine at Prague, tells our newspapers.

This is a true statement, but we are sorry that

the doctor spoiled it by saying that "European scientists are more careful and conservative in making known their findings." We won't forget Friedman of turtle fame; Coue of beaded string fame; Voronoff, Steinach, and a host of others who, to express it mildly, make premature announcements.

Senility—Now that "doctor" Frank Crane has spoken, we know all about senility. There is nothing to indicate that he is more careful of some of his other statements than he is in repeating the one time facetious remarks of the late Doctor Osler. He says: "Senility has nothing in particular to do with old age. . . . I have discovered that youth and senility are mere attitudes toward life." With this remarkable definition of senility and the equally remarkable "discovery," this much read and popular writer concludes with this remarkable statement: "Another recipe for a full and happy old age is found in the advice of Nietzsche: 'Live dangerously. Build your house on the side of a volcano.' We have spent a good deal of sympathy upon destitute old age. Our sympathy should be extended to old people who are perfectly safe."

This is part of the education! the public is getting in medicine and health.

Counterfeit Doctors—Under this heading the Hanford (California) Journal says editorially: "In a profession given to quackery, quacks would attract little attention. The counterfeiting of medical diplomas is in itself a tribute to the medical profession. Counterfeiting implies that the established currency is sound. So it is with this great profession. All the more reason, therefore, why the profession itself should make every effort to eliminate the quacks, and why the public should help by informing itself of every doctor's medical pedigree and ostracizing the occasional pretender or crook."

When the legislation proposed by the League for the Conservation of Public Health becomes law it will solve this situation.

Is R. C. Cabot Being Misquoted?—One of the strong points being used against the medical profession by those who treat the sick by curious means is a statement credited to Doctor R. C. Cabot of Boston that "I know from my own certain knowledge that the vast majority of physicians in Massachusetts cannot make a diagnosis of early tuberculosis. I do not believe that one-tenth of the physicians in any state can tell incipient tuberculosis when they see it from physical signs."

If Doctor Cabot did not make this foolish statement, there would seem to be chances for him to increase his income and render the cause of better health a service at the same time. If he is correctly quoted he should apologize to his colleagues.

Some of our other prominent members, particularly Mayo and Crile, are also being extensively quoted as making statements easily interpreted as derogatory to their colleagues. Are there not enough forces trying to destroy public confidence in physicians and open the door wide for the unqualified without the assistance they can so frequently and readily cull from the careless remarks of prominent physicians and teachers of medicine?

Baby Gets Chance for Life—The press of the entire country feature the story of an eight-months-old baby who was "rushed" from St. Louis to Doctor Jackson of Philadelphia, who "was declared the only person in the country who could remove a tack from the infant's bronchial tubes." Wonderful publicity for Doctor Jackson, but we can't understand how such a splendid opportunity for publicity ever got by Rochester, Minnesota. The implied

reflection upon St. Louis physicians who are expert in the use of the bronchoscope is not at all serious.

Increasing the Goat Industry—Press clippings announce that "goat milk, on an average, sells in this country for 25 to 50 cents a quart. The ordinary milk goat will furnish about 1400 pounds of milk a season, although the high grades give from 2000 to 2400 pounds. Three-quarters of a ton of alfalfa hay and one-fourth of a ton of grain will feed a doe for a year. And goats are immune to tuberculosis. Get your goat."

If the increase in the use of goat milk and other edible portions of goats continues; and if one element in the propagating of goats continues to be exploited, to make the old young again, we are liable to find difficulty in maintaining goat herds. However, this danger may not be as imminent as it appears, because the Journal recently refused a display advertisement from a slaughter house offering to supply the rejuvenation glands to all physicians, as they are now supplying them to some. No wonder abscesses are sometimes reported to follow injections of alleged pure goat gland extract which was purchased from slaughter houses.

The Perils of Psychology—"The Spectator" (S. F. Examiner) in discussing this subject considers the danger "in this present fad is that people shall get to contemplating themselves until they lose their normal vigor which characterizes the healthy and become probably sickly and certainly a nuisance. . . . Freud's researches and conclusions are of great value to those who are equipped to use them for the benefit of the race. But Freud becomes a pest in the hands of those who are ignorant and unskilled to use his theories. The chief peril for the amateur Freudian lies in the fact that much is made of repressed sexual tendencies much better dealt with under the purifying influences of idealism and in the wholesome activities of normal social life than by continuous self-study, which easily leads to morbidity."

Public Health Lectures at University Hospital—A series of lectures on health topics is announced for the next four months by the University of California Medical School. These lectures, by well-known bay city physicians and surgeons, will be delivered in Toland Hall, University Hospital, Third and Parnassus avenues, San Francisco, at 2:15 p. m., on successive Sundays, the initial lecture having been January 20 on "What the Public Should Know About the Prevention of Diphtheria," by E. C. Fleischner, M. D.

Lectures for the following months, it is announced, cover a wide variety of subjects, including modern dentistry, goiter, asthma, bone and joint diseases, vaccines and antitoxins, life expectancy, anesthesia, prenatal care, indigestion, cancer, and other topics of vital popular interest.

The American Congress on Internal Medicine—The eighth annual clinical session of the American Congress on Internal Medicine will be held in the amphitheaters, wards and laboratories of the various institutions concerned with medical teaching, at St. Louis, Mo., beginning Monday, February 18, 1924. Practitioners and laboratory workers interested in the progress of scientific, clinical and research medicine are invited to take advantage of the opportunities afforded by this session.

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THE PHYSICIANS' CIVIC RESPONSIBILITIES

Letter from President Ray Lyman Wilbur of the A. M. A. to President T. C. Edwards of the California Medical Association, and Doctor Edward's reply:

President Wilbur: "If we of the medical profession are to play our proper part in public affairs we must work largely through existing organizations. This, it seems to me, means that every State medical association should have a well-organized committee on public welfare and legislation. Such a committee to be effective must deal in a practical way with men and with legislation. It seems to me desirable for it to make plans along three lines: (1) See that the best possible candidates are nominated, particularly for State offices; (2) See that of the candidates nominated the best possible are supported for election; (3) See that candidates before and after election are kept fully and accurately informed concerning matters pertaining to public health and the medical profession.

It is important to have this subject approached on a basis that will not seem purely selfish, but that will be for the good of the public in general, which, of course, means that it will be satisfactory to the medical profession.

It is of advantage if the chairman of the committee is one who has demonstrated his efficiency by past service and who can be induced to keep the position for some considerable period of time. His efficiency will depend upon the extent of his acquaintance, his knowledge of legislative procedure, and will naturally increase with each year's service.

In order to handle the administrative work of the committee, a good secretary is necessary. Either the chairman or the secretary should reside at the State capital and, if possible, they should reside so that they can have frequent personal conferences.

Some of the State associations are already effectively organized along these lines or others that have been proven by local experience to be equally satisfactory. In some States the arrangement is not so fortunate and it is particularly in these States that I urge prompt organization. If we are to present the uniform front that is necessary, effective organization in every State is essential. This applies both to State and National affairs. Organization should not wait until the Legislature meets or Congress convenes, but such action as may be necessary should be taken at once.

There has been set up at Association headquarters a Bureau of Legal Medicine and Legislation, which can be called upon freely by the legislative committee for suggestions and advice. I hope very much that the officers of your society will review their present plans in this regard or consider new ones, and that they will take particular note of the desire of the Association to be of service through the establishment of the Bureau of Legal Medicine and Legislation under Dr. Woodward."

President Edwards: "Your letter of October 31, 1923, which was sent to every State medical association, suggesting the need for 'a well-organized committee on public welfare and legislation,' was referred by me to the January meeting of the Executive Committee of the State Association. I said in my letter to you of November 15, that it was my impression that, as far as California is concerned, the proposed work of such a committee was being effectively covered by the League for the Conservation of Public Health.

I felt, however, that my judgment alone should not decide such an important question. The Execu-